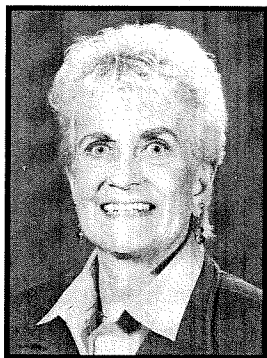


# Hammerstrom's

for the people  
in the 17th Senate District

## Hotline



State Senator

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**REPUBLICANS SAY NO TO TAX INCREASES.** By addressing measures that bring equity between nonresident and resident tax policy, along with common sense to the Michigan Tax Code, Republican legislators have announced they are saying no to any tax increases and will ensure that Michigan's tax policies work for Michigan families and businesses and not against them. At a joint news conference conducted in the State Capitol, Senate Finance Committee members and House Tax Policy Committee members announced they are opposed to any tax increases and will work to pass legislation that includes four legitimate tax policy changes. Among the 15 tax policy changes announced by the administration earlier this year, joint committee members cite 11 as tax increases, with the other four being reasonable tax policy changes. Those changes are intended to create a level playing field between resident and nonresident tax policies.

**FEDERAL FUNDING FOR MERIT ANNOUNCED.** Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema said Congress' approval of nearly \$706 million in aid to Michigan—including \$365 million in addition to Medicaid funding—enables the Merit Award

Scholarship to continue making a college education more affordable for thousands of Michigan students next year. Senator Sikkema said the federal assistance makes it possible for the Michigan Legislature to fund their budget priorities without raising taxes or resorting to drastic budget cuts. Last week, Senate Republicans outlined their plans to generate more than \$100 million a year through the "Driver Responsibility" and "Claim It Correctly" programs. With the federal government helping Michigan cover Medicaid costs, the pressure to use the Merit Award funding for other purposes no longer exists.

**BEACH GROOMING LEGISLATION PASSED BY SENATE.** The Legislature recently passed a measure that would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow for the conduct of beach maintenance activities, without a permit, in areas that are classified as wetlands or as Great Lakes submerged lands. House Bill 4257 is based on testimony taken during Great Lakes Conservation Task Force hearings in 2001, on which I served as a member. Private property owners who live along the Lake Huron shoreline will now be permitted to take certain steps to groom their beaches during times of low water levels. Beach grooming activities are currently regulated by the Department of Environmental Quality and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Often, permits requesting permission for even the smallest steps to groom personal beaches on private property have been declined. Hopefully, HB 4257 will offer shoreline property owners much-needed relief. It will now go before the Governor to be signed.

**LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO PROTECT FAMILIES DURING TIME OF NEED.** Members of the Senate Committee on Local, Urban and State Affairs recently approved legislation that revises regulations regarding prepaid funeral goods and services, and to require cemeteries to be inspected at least once every three years. Senate Bill 512, which amends the Prepaid Funeral Contract Funding Act, requires trusting 100 percent for monies paid in advance for funeral and/or cemetery goods and services, requires refunds of at least 90 percent of monies paid plus interest and income, and necessitates that price disclosure requirements be extended to both pre-need and at-need sales. Senate Bill 513 mandates the inspections of cemeteries by the state cemetery commissioner, and allows the individual to assess a fee not to exceed \$1,000 to defray the actual cost of the inspection. The bills are currently awaiting consideration by the full Senate.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Michigan has more miles of shoreline (3,288 miles/5,292 kilometers) than the distance from Maine to Florida. There are two square miles of water for every three square miles of land.